

County of Loudoun
Department of Planning
MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 26, 2012

TO: Kate McConnell, AICP, Project Manager
Land Use Review

FROM: Pat Giglio, Planner III
Community Planning

SUBJECT: SPEX 2012-0036 – Brambleton Community Park

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant, Loudoun County Department of Construction and Waste Management, requests a Special Exception to permit lighted sports fields at the Brambleton Community Park in Ashburn. The proposed lighting of the nine sports field within the Brambleton Community Park is in general conformance with the policies of the Revised General Plan. However to be consistent with the lighting and night sky policies of the Plan issues with the intensity of lighting at the property boundaries and its potential to degrade the nighttime environment and spill over onto adjoining residential properties should be addressed.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Loudoun County Department of Construction and Waste Management requests, a Special Exception to permit lighted sports fields at the Brambleton Community Park in Ashburn. The park is located at the intersection of North Star Boulevard (Route 659 Relocated) and Belmont Ridge Road (Route 659) and bisected by Belmont Ridge Road. The park is located to the north of Briar Woods High School which also has lighted sports fields. The applicant is proposing to light nine sports field within the Brambleton Community Park; four existing full size and two existing smaller baseball diamonds on the west side of Belmont Ridge Road and two football fields and a soccer field on the east side of Belmont Ridge Road. The proposed lighting of the sports field will extend their period of use to better serve the community and demand for sports fields.

The existing baseball diamonds on the west side of Belmont Ridge Road are bordered to the east by a gravel parking lot. A forested area which is designated as a tree conservation area is located to the north, south and west of the baseball diamonds. The

two-story headquarters of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) is located to the west of the two small baseball diamonds and is the only building potentially impacted by the proposed lighted fields on the west side of Belmont Ridge Road.



Vicinity Map

The two football fields and soccer field located on a 28.72 acre property on the east side of Belmont Ridge Road have been rough graded, though the park facilities which include parking and restroom facilities have not been constructed. The two football fields are bordered to the south by the Grand Townes at Brambleton, a future

townhome development. A soccer field on the eastern boundary of the property is bordered by forested HOA common open space associated with Forest Ridge and single-family homes within the Windermere development. The Windermere development is partially buffered from the soccer field by existing mature trees located on the park property. A large lot single-family residence is located to the north of the soccer field and is also buffered by existing mature trees located on the park property.

The properties which compose the Brambleton Community Park are zoned PD-H4 (Planned Development- Housing), administered as R-8 (Single-Family Residential). A Special Exception is required for “playing fields and courts, lighted” within the zoning district. The sports fields which compose Brambleton Community Park were approved subject to ZMAP 1993-0005, ZCPA 1993-0007, and SPEX 1993-0017. The installation of the proposed light poles and underground electric conduits to light the sports fields will not impact any aspects of the Green Infrastructure as outlined in the Revised General Plan. However, staff has identified potential issues with light trespass on adjoining residential properties. The applicant has provided a photometric study which illustrates the anticipated intensity of light at the property boundaries associated with the lighted sports fields. The photometric study indicates that the highest light level on the boundary of the park, 4.15 foot candles, is located on the southern boundary of the park adjacent to the future townhomes within the Grand Townes at Brambleton.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The site is governed under the policies of the Revised General Plan and the Countywide Transportation Plan (2010 CTP) and the Loudoun County Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan (2003 Bike-Ped Plan). The subject site is located in the Ashburn Community of the Suburban Policy Area. The Revised General Plan identifies the subject site as suitable for Residential uses (Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Planned Land Use Map). The lighting and night sky policies in Chapter 5 of the Revised General Plan were applied in the evaluation of the application.

LIGHTING

The Revised General Plan promotes sound night-lighting standards that will “reduce light pollution such as glare, energy waste, light trespass, and the deterioration of the natural nighttime environment” (Revised General Plan, Chapter 5, Lighting and Night Sky, text). The policies also promote the use of energy-efficient lighting that minimizes unnecessary and intrusive light trespass to preserve the natural beauty of the night skies (Revised General Plan, Chapter 5, Lighting and Night Sky Policies, Policy 1).

The applicant is proposing to light nine sports field within the Brambleton Community Park; four existing full size and two existing smaller baseball diamonds on the west side of Belmont Ridge Road and two football fields and a soccer field on the east side of Belmont Ridge Road. The applicant has provided a photometric study which illustrates the anticipated intensity of light at the property boundaries associated with the proposed lighted sports fields. The photometric study indicates that the highest light levels, 0.31 to 4.15 foot candles, at the property boundary are anticipated in proximity to the football field on the southern property boundary adjoining the future townhomes within Grand

Townes at Brambleton. The rear yards of the future townhomes are located approximately 40' from the proposed light poles of the football field. Additionally a soccer field on the eastern boundary of the property is located approximately 180' from the rear yards of single-family homes within the Windermere development where light levels at the property boundary are anticipated to range between 0.29 to 1.60 foot candles. The single-family homes are partially buffered from the soccer field by existing matures trees located on the park property. In both locations the proposed lighting of the sports fields has the potential to degrade the nighttime environment and will spill over onto adjoining residential properties.



View east of football field and future townhomes
within the Grand Townes at Brambleton.

While the proposed lighting scheme for the sports fields does not exceed the Light and Glare Standards of the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance (Section 5-1504(A)) which permit publically owned facilities utilized for athletic competition to cause illumination up to 10.00 foot candles above background light levels measured at the boundary of the property, staff still has concerns with the intensity of lighting in proximity to the adjoining residential properties.

Staff finds that the proposed lighting has the potential to degrade the nighttime environment and will spill over onto adjoining residential properties. Staff recommends that the Applicant consider relocating the poles and light fixtures or

adding additional poles and fixtures that allow the light to be more directed toward the fields to further limit light spillover onto the adjoining residential properties and reduce foot candle levels at the property line. Additionally, the applicant should provide details on the height of the proposed light poles and the size of the light arrays so that staff can better evaluate the application.

Staff further recommends that the Applicant meet with the affected property owners to the east and south to discuss the proposed lighting as well as other aspects of the proposal, if this has not been done already. Staff also requests more specific information demonstrating that the proposed lighting is the minimum necessary to illuminate the proposed athletic fields and has been specifically chosen or designed to reduce off-site glare and spill over. Staff also recommends commitments that specify the type of lighting that will be provided (e.g., maximum height of poles, intensity of lighting, a design that reduces spillover, etc.) and that the outdoor lighting will be turned off by a certain time at night.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed lighting of the nine sports field within the Brambleton Community Park is in general conformance with the policies of the Revised General Plan. However to be consistent with the lighting and night sky policies of the Plan issues with the intensity of lighting at the property boundaries and its potential to degrade the nighttime environment and spill over onto adjoining residential properties should be addressed.

Staff is available to meet with the applicant to discuss any comments or questions.

cc: Julie Pastor, AICP, Planning Director
Cindy Keegan, AICP, Program Manager, Community Planning, via e-mail